

SPEECH

by

LT. GENERAL VERNON A. WALTERS

before

GEORGE MASON AND GEORGE WASHINGTON CHAPTERS

of the

VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Gunston Hall Plantation, Virginia

13 May 1976

President Mason, Presidents of the Two Chapters,
Members of the Two Chapters:

I feel very honored at being asked to come here tonight and, in addition to being honored, I feel a very particular pleasure in coming to a group like this which cherishes the flame that has brought our nation from its infancy to be what it still is in the world today, in spite of what some people may think: the best hope for most of mankind.

I am particularly happy to have the occasion to speak to you here in this house, in this Bicentennial Year, in this house which was built 18 years before the Declaration of Independence and which represents for so many Americans the link with that past which has contributed so much to make us what we are.

Our ancestors fought to create this nation, but that creation was not a one-time affair. Our nation will not live and prosper and remain free unless each succeeding generation is prepared to make the same kind of sacrifices as those which the original Founding Fathers made. Human freedom is unfortunately not won once

and for all. It is a struggle that has no end. It began before us and it will go on after we have passed from the scene.

As we look at the unequal struggle which gave birth to this nation, we see many things that enabled those far-sighted men to win: courage which is the greatest of human virtues because it is the guarantee of all the others; ability to mobilize and inspire their fellow countrymen, to make them understand exactly what was at stake. They used force of arms and they used intelligence.

Now in the world in which we live today you might have expected that I was going to talk to you about intelligence, and I am, because you cannot live just by force alone. You have to use the intelligence that God gave us all and the intelligence that we can acquire that will permit us to remain free. The United States today faces a potential adversary who has more power than any of the adversaries that our nation has faced since its birth. All of the enemies the United States has faced in the last 200 years have been basically continental powers. Germany at the height

of its power was basically a European power. It could send submarines off our coast, but basically it had no ability to do any real harm to the American mainland and the American people at home.

In the past the United States was considered unreachable by most countries and, therefore, unbeatable. That situation is unfortunately no longer true. Very recent events such as Angola show quite clearly that the Soviet Union not only is a global power but is prepared and able to project its force far across the oceans 10,000 miles from the Soviet Union. And we can ignore that warning only at our peril.

Our forefathers understood that force alone is not enough and I would say that of all American wars, with the possible exception of the second World War, the Revolutionary War shows the greatest uses of intelligence by our leaders than in any other war in our history. It was a difficult war to fight because in a sense it was a sort of civil war: the enemy spoke the same language, and it was very difficult to distinguish between friend and foe. And yet those who led us in that struggle, General Washington in particular, were among the greatest users of intelligence in American history.

General Washington called for estimates that looked very much like the estimates that our modern intelligence community produces today. What are the British most likely to do? If they do it, what will be the consequences? If they do not adopt this most likely course, what other courses are open to them? And General Washington had a keen sense of the importance of secrecy. General Washington did not share the view which we hear often expressed today: that everybody ought to know everything.

General Washington wrote a letter to his chief of intelligence in New Jersey, Colonel Elias Dayton, in which he said: "The need for procuring good intelligence is so obvious that I have nothing further to add on this subject. All that remains for me to tell you is that these matters must be kept as secret as possible. For lack of secrecy, these enterprises, no matter how well conceived or how promising the outlook, generally fail. I am sir, your obedient servant, George Washington."

On another occasion General Washington was spending the night at the home of a sympathizer in Connecticut, called Holcomb, and in the morning he got on his horse

to ride off and Mrs. Holcomb came out to bid him farewell. She said, "General, pray, where do you ride tonight?" General Washington leaned down in the saddle and said, "Madame, can you keep a secret?" and she said, "Of course." He said, "So can I, Madame," tipped his hat and rode on.

And yet you hear all the time now that you have to tell everybody everything because that's the "old American way." It is not the "old American way." It has never been the American way. Our forefathers, because they were able to keep secrets, forged a free nation.

Throughout American history that has-been equally true. Mr. Truman, in 1956, said, "It matters not to the United States whether its secrets become known through the action of spies or through publication. The damage to the United States in both cases is exactly the same, and I for one," said Mr. Truman, "do not believe that the best interests of our country are served by going on the principle that everybody has the right to know everything about everything."

All of us who work in intelligence know we cannot use secrecy to cover abuses. The American people will

not tolerate this. But we do not feel it is necessary to conduct an international strip-tease, which, if you travel around the world you will find has made us, in some degree, an object of derision to most of the people in the world. They can't believe what they are seeing and hearing. The United States handing ammunition to the enemies of the United States so that it can be used to degrade our position in the world.

I had the head of a friendly foreign service say to me, "I don't understand why all you Americans aren't Catholics." I said, "What has that got to do with it?" "Well," he said, "it's the only religion that affords confession for everybody, but I suppose it's the fact that you have to do it privately in a small wooden box that is the drawback." They find it difficult to believe.

Every other nation has had problems with its intelligence services; they have appointed a commission of distinguished citizens to look into it; they have conducted the inquiry with discretion, with some regard to the lives of the people which may be at stake. And then they have presented their report to the parliament or the congress which has then taken the necessary steps to correct those things which needed correction.

We have, in a sense, provided the enemies of the United States with valuable ammunition that they will use against us because our opponents in the world today do not have the same kind of constraints on them. They well know the importance we attach to the rights of our citizens, to fair play, and to the liberties of our people. And they rejoice in the fact that they do not have similar constraints in their attempt to alter or control our society. And they take every advantage of that.

If we had done certain things that should be reported upon and they were not going to be used against the United States, that's one thing. But it is the public nature of the spectacle we have seen recently. One of the problems we have is that no one else in the world understands what we're doing and we are not the only democratic country in the world. There are other countries which have democratic governments and have found ways of handling these problems without necessarily giving ammunition to their opponents.

People say to me, "How do you stop these abuses?" Well I say, "The only real way I know is to stop using human beings," because as long as you have large numbers

of human beings, you are going to have a certain amount of things go on that you wouldn't want to go on.

But you've heard about a lot of things that have allegedly gone on. What are the facts on these? You've heard a great deal about assassinations. Well, the ultimate answer is that nobody was assassinated. You've heard a good deal about illegal phone taps. Well, the Director of Central Intelligence is the only person in the United States who is charged by law with the protection of his sources and methods. In the last 27 years there were 32 such phone taps. Now if you read the newspapers, you have the impression that millions of poor innocent Americans were being tapped. There were 32 such phone taps in 27 years. That's a little over one phone tap a year. Then you have this mail-opening business. Well, if we look back to the Revolution, we will find that mail-opening was a very common practice. This does not mean that it was right; it is against the law. But what mail was being opened? Here again you get this impression that everybody's mail was being opened. The only letters being opened were letters going to or coming from the Soviet Union and China.

Nearly all of those letters either already had been opened, or were going to be opened when they got to the other end.

I cannot tell you that we have not had people that have not done things they should not have done. I cannot tell you there have not been exercises of bad judgment and stupidity. I checked on the figures the other day. We've had 76,000 people go through that Agency in the last 29 years. When you are dealing with numbers like 76,000 people, you're going to have some nuts, some kooks, some people who do stupid things. There are no two ways about it. But I submit that if you take any other community in the United States, or anywhere else, of 76,000 people, and submit it to the kind of scrutiny to which we have been submitted, our record will not look badly.

You hear all this loose talk about criminal and illegal acts. Well not only has there not been enough evidence to convict anybody of anything, there hasn't even been enough evidence to induce any grand jury to indict anyone. But you still have all this loose talk about criminal and illegal activities.

— As I said before, I can't tell you there haven't been some very wrong things done, but this impression of mass

wrong-doing, mass criminal activity, simply does not correspond to reality.

People tend to forget the charter and the times. If we insist on looking at what was done yesterday through the eyes of today, we will always have a distorted picture. I don't have to tell you, who belong to this Society, the discussion there was among the Founding Fathers over the question of slavery. I don't have to tell you that universal suffrage did not spring into being with the birth of our country. There were certain qualifications and requirements which are incomprehensible to us today, but which seemed perfectly logical to them.

I came to the Central Intelligence Agency four years ago. I wasn't there during the earlier period. For instance, when they were working on the last CIA investigation which was the Doolittle Commission, in the Fifties. And what did the Doolittle Commission say? The Doolittle Commission said that the United States faced an enemy ruthless and determined by every means to destroy us; that we should match their dedication with ours and their ruthlessness with ours. This is the charter under which the Agency people were operating.

Most of these things about which you've heard occurred in the early Fifties or Sixties. They have very little connection with what is happening at the present time. People's ideas were different in those days. Two Presidents of the United States had sanctioned an invasion of Cuba, which was certainly going to involve somebody getting killed. The U.S. Government had gone along with this. If you read the speeches of some of the people who are doing a great deal of speaking today, you will find that their attitude at that time was quite different and I am sure a number of them would not care to be reminded of some of the things they said at that time.

The passing of time presents a slightly different picture.

Now what is this intelligence that has led to all this? What is it and why do we need it? Well, intelligence is accurate information concerning the activities, capabilities or intentions of foreign countries which may affect our lives. It is the analysis and the dissemination to the proper decision authority in the United States of that information and that intelligence. Why do we need it? We need it for the same reasons that George Washington sent agents into New York

City; we need it for the same reason that he sent Nathan Hale behind the British lines. We need it more than at any time since.

We Americans have always had this passion for building up an effective intelligence agency during our wars and dismantling it after. We had a superb intelligence organization during the Revolutionary War. But subsequently Mr. Lincoln had to hire a private detective firm to obtain information during the civil conflict that tore this nation from 1861 to 1865. In World War I we built up a splendid intelligence organization. In World War II I was sent to the U. S. Army Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie in August 1942 and the Commandant was a British colonel. That was the state of American intelligence at the outbreak of World War II. This time we've had a little longer because we've had the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The wreckers are upon us again. And they have tried to make the real issue these so-called aberrations and wrong-doings--and I can't tell you there haven't been some.

But that isn't the real issue. The real issue before the American people as we move into the last quarter of this century is: are we going to move forward with eyes to see and ears to hear or are we going to stumble into that last quarter blind and deaf until the day we have to choose between abject humiliation and nuclear capitulation. That is the real issue that is before the American people.

It is perfectly possible to correct the various things ~~that are~~ wrong, but it is not necessary to perform an international strip-tease to do so. And in some measure that is what we are doing.

As I travel around the world, one of the things that appalls me is not the accusations being leveled by foreigners against the United States, it is the use being made of what we ourselves disclose in a context that serves the purpose of the people who are hostile to the United States.

Now I don't believe any of us are opposed to the investigations per se, providing they are done with a modicum of discretion and a modicum of understanding of what is at stake. It was not until Mr. Welch was killed

in Athens that the fact came home that this was not just a game of peek-a-boo-I've-caught-you-spying, but that people could die as a result of this. Too often we don't realize what the real world outside is like. We don't realize the immense effort that is being mounted against us. The undying, untiring struggle that is going on on a silent battlefield which we did not choose but upon which we are forced to fight whether we like it or not. That struggle is an incessant one.

We wish to remain a free people, and as we look across the ocean, what do we see? We see the Soviet Union talking relaxation of tensions but at the same time conducting a military program which has no parallel in the history of any nation in peacetime.

We see the Soviet Union deploying, right now, five new systems of third-generation ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States. We see the Soviet Union building aircraft carriers, building more and larger submarines capable of launching larger and more powerful and more accurate missiles against the United States-- not from the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but from their harbors in the Soviet Union. We see the Soviets building a vast fleet of surface ships. We see them improving the

equipment and training of their conventional forces. We see them building enormous quantities of tanks, tactical aircraft, upgrading all of their forces in every possible field.

Now the Russians are very fond of proverbs and I always remember one of my favorite Russian proverbs which says:

"If you make friends with a bear, hold onto your axe."
Now they've told us to do this.

There is a story of a couple of young Americans who went to Moscow and they were being taken around the city by a young Russian. He took them to all the historical monuments and finally he took them to the zoo. In the zoo they saw the various animals and finally they got to this huge cage in which there was a gigantic Russian bear and in the same cage with him was a small white lamb. They thought it was odd to put those two in the same cage so they said, "Why do you put these two in the same cage?" He said, "This is to prove that peaceful coexistence is possible." So one young American said, "Well, it's very impressive." And the other young American said, "It sure is convincing." The young Russian, looking around and not seeing anybody, said, "Of course, you understand,

every morning we have to put in a new lamb." And as long as you don't run out of lambs, there is no problem.

These are just some of the realities we have to face. I don't know what their intentions are, but their capabilities are tremendous. Their capabilities against the United States are unmatched by any country since Valley Forge. Whether they will use it or not, I don't know. This is the reality with which we have to live.

We have to give the American people the answers to four great questions in my opinion: Who will be in control of the Soviet Union five years from now; what will be their disposition toward us and our allies; what is there in Russian research and development today that will impact upon our lives? And the same questions for China.

And in addition to that, we have a new factor which is the economic factor. In the past, economic intelligence was considered a sort of by-product of a military intelligence study. But today we have a situation in which billions of dollars of American currency are held by foreign powers and can be used in ways that will affect the livelihood of an American workman in Sacramento or Omaha. There are billions of petrodollars and Eurodollars

being moved around the world and if we do not know
to what use they are being put, we will find ourselves
in a very unpleasant situation--not military but
economic.

So all of these burdens are heaped upon us at a
very difficult time for us. I would like to tell you
that these investigations have hurt us greatly.
Fortunately, I cannot tell you that. I marvel at the
steadfastness of our friends. I marvel at the stead-
fastness--and I can say this because I am not an old
CIA man--of the people within the CIA. I marvel at
our colleagues in Defense who have been subjected to
much of the same sort of thing. They try to set us one
against the other in the old tactics: to divide.

One of the most terrifying things I have ever read
is a book called The Art of War, written 25 centuries
ago by a Chinese author called Sun Tzu. In it he
describes how you undo your enemies and I would just
like to quote you a few items from it so you can see how
little human nature has changed and how accurate this
description, written 25 centuries ago, is today. The
first thing he said was, "Fighting is the most primitive
way of making war upon your enemies." And then he goes

on to describe how you undo your enemies: Number one, cover with ridicule everything that is valid in your opponent's country. Number two, involve their leaders in criminal enterprises and at the right time turn them over to the scorn of their fellow countrymen. Number three, aggravate by every means at your command all the existing differences in your opponent's country. Number four, agitate the young against the old.

There are 13 of these prescriptions and he winds up with this final conclusion: "The supreme excellence is not to win a hundred victories in a hundred battles; the supreme excellence is to subdue the armies of your enemies without ever having to fight them." No one has ever beaten the United States on the battlefield. You cannot stop the United States on the outside; the only way you can do it is to stop it from the inside, to convince Americans that their cause is unjust or immoral. This is the way you wage war on a country like ours which has a strong sense of what is right and wrong. These are the kinds--the new forms--of war which we face today. It is not simply the thundering of divisions across Europe or Asia. It is a totally new form of war for which we must be prepared and which we must recognize as such.

As I mentioned to you, I would like to be able, in one sense, to tell you these investigations have grievously hurt us: I cannot. I never cease to marvel that in the Agency, subjected as it is and as it has been in the last few years to this tremendous, incessant bombardment that in my view has no parallel in American history, these people have steadfastly continued to produce the finest intelligence in the world. Many of our people who travel abroad have had their names exposed in newspapers and have had the finger pointed at them as targets for assassination. Well, I am happy and proud to tell you that not one of these people who have been exposed anywhere in the world has asked to be transferred or moved. This speaks a great deal for the kind of people we have.

People often ask me, "How are the people out there taking it?" Well, Mr. Truman once said if you couldn't stand the heat to stay out of the kitchen. The Russian proverb for that is: If you fear wolves, do not go into the forest. And I never cease to marvel how many kitchen volunteers we have at the Central Intelligence Agency. I never cease to marvel at their ability to

continue to provide our leaders, not with gold rings in the sense that on the 27th of October there is going to be a coup in Lower Slobovia, but with the real product of intelligence, which is to broaden the understanding and comprehension of our leaders and decision-makers about the problems which they must face.

I can only tell you what my own experience is. For four years I have sat at that desk and watched intelligence go across my desk. The intelligence is better today than at any time in the past. That is due to American inventive genius, it is due to the steadfastness of our people, it is due to the technical excellence of the people that we have.

You know, they like to tell you that the CIA and the DIA and so forth, are enemies and hostile to each other and the NSA. We are not. Our people talk to one another all the time; each of us is not sitting on his own little private pile of information. That's what led us to Pearl Harbor. Everybody had a piece of the information but there was no place to put it together. We survived a naval Pearl Harbor. Could we survive a nuclear Pearl Harbor? If we are not to have a nuclear

Pearl Harbor, we must have an effective intelligence set-up. We do, I believe, have an effective intelligence set-up. And what does it cost the American people? Less than one penny out of every dollar that is spent by the U. S. Government.

Since 1969, the number of people devoted to intelligence in the United States has gone down by 40 percent. And yet we have had all these new burdens put on us. The cost of intelligence has gone down as the proportion of the defense spending and as a proportion of the national budget. It has gone down as a real proportion, not obviously with inflation in actual dollar costs, but as a real proportion, it has gone down continuously. And yet, because of the people we have been able to get, and because of their dedication to keeping this nation alive and a hope for the world, we have been able to go on.

We will continue to go on. Everyone of us who has chosen this as a profession knows the responsibility we have before the American people: to give them answers and never let them be surprised. Because, if we fall, there is no one else to pick up the torch.

Thank you very much.